

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. (Previously Presented) A computer implemented method:
 2 estimating an expected component surplus, wherein said estimating comprises
 3 identifying a plurality of components required to produce a product;
 4 defining a vector of connect rates for the components;
 5 defining an uncancelable level for each of the components, each of the
 6 uncancelable levels defining a quantity of the each of the components below
 7 which the quantity of the each of the components cannot be liquidated without
 8 incurring a charge;
 9 assuming that a selected one of the components is available at least at an
 10 uncancelable level of the uncancelable levels corresponding to the selected one of
 11 the components; and
 12 computing the expected component surplus for the selected component using a
 13 mean production for the product, the uncancelable level and the vector of connect
 14 rates, wherein
 15 the computing is performed by a computer.

1 2. (Previously Presented) The computer implemented method of claim 1, the
 2 estimating further comprising:
 3 defining a planned level for the each of the components, each of the planned levels
 4 defining a quantity at which a corresponding one of the components is expected to
 5 be available.

1 3. (Previously Presented) The computer implemented method of claim 2, the
 2 estimating further comprising:
 3 assuming that each of the remaining ones of the components is available at the planned
 4 level corresponding to the each of the remaining ones of the components, wherein
 5 the remaining ones of the components are ones of the components other than the
 6 selected one of the components.

1 4. (Previously Presented) The computer implemented method of claim 3, the
2 estimating further comprising:
3 using the planned levels in the computing the expected component surplus.

1 5. (Previously Presented) The computer implemented method of claim 4, the
2 estimating further comprising:
3 estimating the mean production for the product.

1 6 - 15. (Cancelled)